

THE
BROCHURE SERIES
OF ARCHITECTURAL ILLUSTRATION.

1900.

SEPTEMBER

No. 9.

THE DUCAL PALACE: VENICE

"**C**ONSIDERED as the principal representation of the Venetian school of architecture, the Ducal Palace is the Parthenon of Venice," wrote Ruskin. To know its history would be to know the entire history of the Republic, for it was not alone the residence of her doges, but at different epochs her senate-house, her court of justice, a prison, and even a place of execution. Combining thus in one structure, as it does, the greatest architectural and the greatest historical importance, there is, perhaps, no more interesting monument now existing in the world.

In his suggestive work upon Italy, Taine has vividly described the effect of a first sight of the Ducal Palace. "Like a magnificent jewel in a brilliant setting, it effaces its surroundings," he writes. "Never has like architecture been seen. All here is novel. You feel yourself drawn out of the conventional; you realize that there is an entire world outside the Classic or Gothic forms which we impose on ourselves and endlessly repeat; that human invention is illimitable, and that, like nature, it may break all the rules, and produce a perfect work after a model opposed in every particular to that to which we are instructed to conform. Every habit of the eye is reversed; and, with surprise and delight, we here see oriental fancy grafting the full on the empty instead of the empty on the full. A colonnade of robust shafts bears a second and lighter one decorated with ogives and

trefoils, while upon this frail support expands a massive wall of red and white marble, whose courses interlace in designs and reflect the light. Above, a cornice of open pyramids, pinnacles, spiracles and festoons intersects the sky with its border,—a marble vegetation bristling and blooming above the vermillion and pearly tones of the façade.

"You enter the courtyard, and immediately your eyes are filled with a new richness. Nothing is bare or cold. Erudite and critical pedantry has not here intervened, under the pretext of purity and correctness, to restrain lively imagination and the craving for visual enjoyment. The builders of Venice were not austere; they did not restrict themselves to the prescriptions of books; they did not make up their minds to yawn admiringly at a façade which had been sanctioned by Vitruvius; they wanted an architectural work to delight their whole sentient being. They decked it with ornaments, columns and statues, they rendered it luxurious and joyous. They placed colossal pagans like Mars and Neptune on it, and flanked them with biblical figures like Adam and Eve; the sculptors of the fifteenth century enlivened it with their lank realistic effigies, and those of the sixteenth with their animated and muscular statues.

"You mount the princely steps with a sort of timidity and respect, ashamed of the dull black coat you wear, and reminded by contrast of the embroidered silk robes,

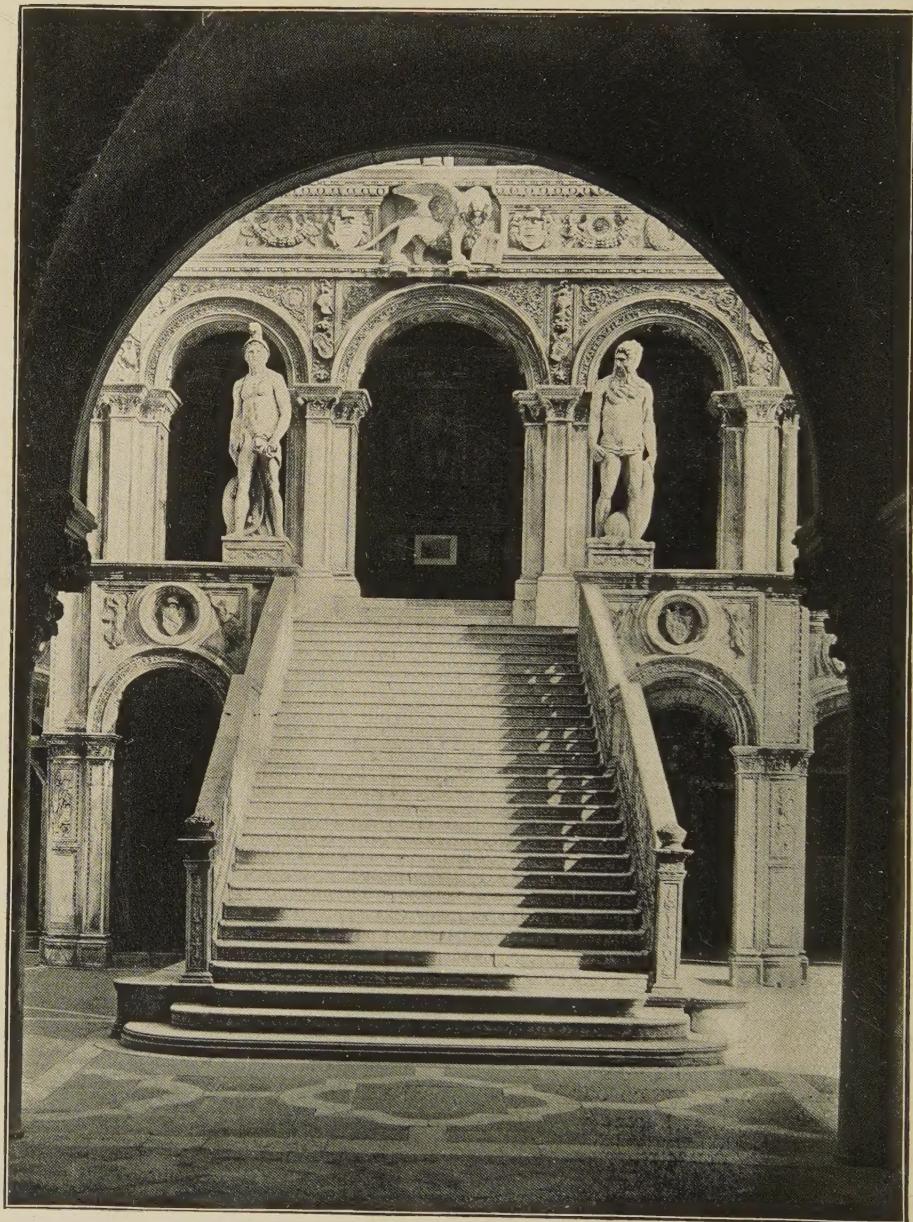


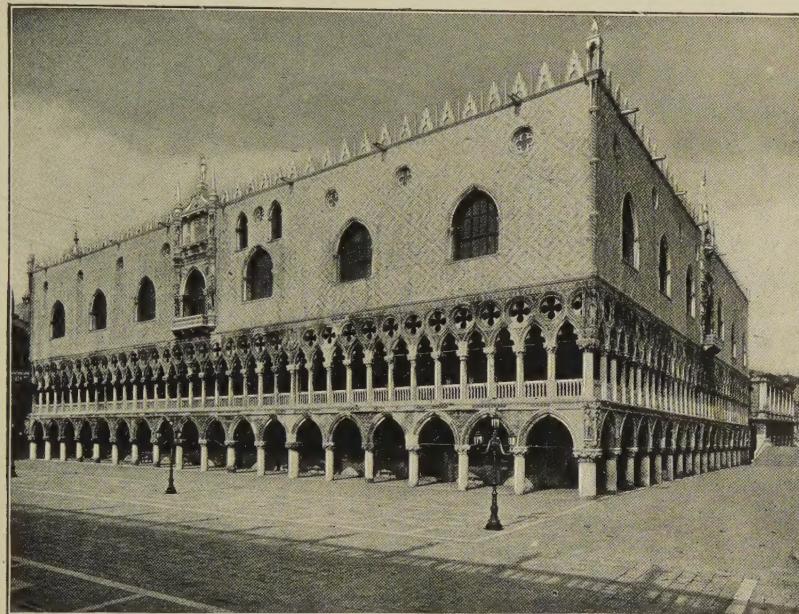
PLATE LXVIII

SCALA DEI GIGANTI: DUCAL PALACE

the pompous sweeping dalmatics, the Byzantine tiaras and brodekins,—all that seigniorial magnificence for which these marble stairways were designed. All the genius of the city at its brightest period assembled here to glorify imperial Venice in the erection of a memorial of her victories and an apotheosis of her grandeur."

The history of the construction of the Palace is obscure and confusing,—a bald array of senatorial décrets and dates. The original Doges' Palace, probably a small

along the Piazzetta side as far as the tenth capital. At this point the work seems to have remained stationary for some years, and a considerable portion of Ziani's palace was still in existence. In 1422 a decree was passed that the new palace should be extended over the site of Ziani's building; and in a few years the remainder of the external façade was completed up to its juncture with the Church of St. Mark. The Porta della Carta, which unites the Palace with the Church, was added in



DUCAL PALACE*

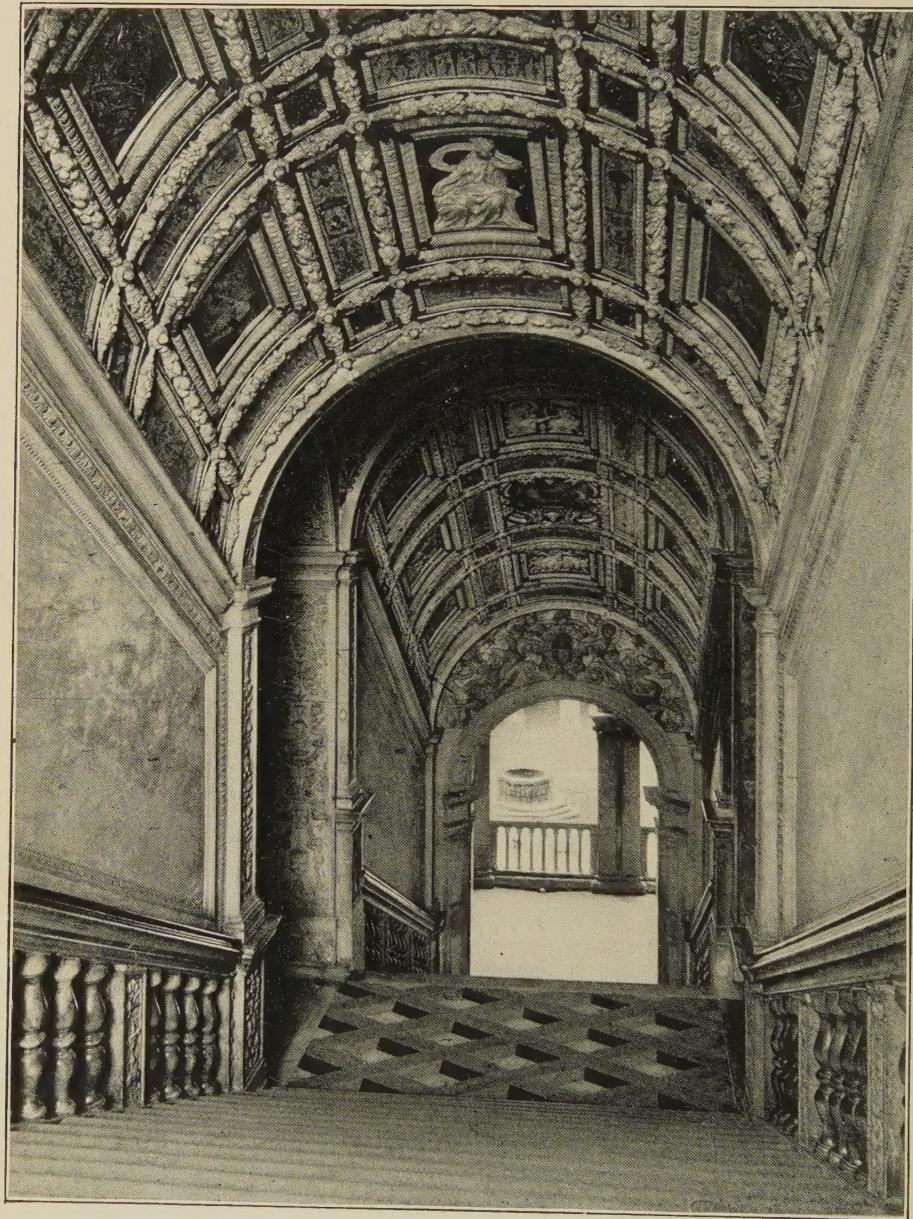
PIAZZETTA AND SEA FAÇADES

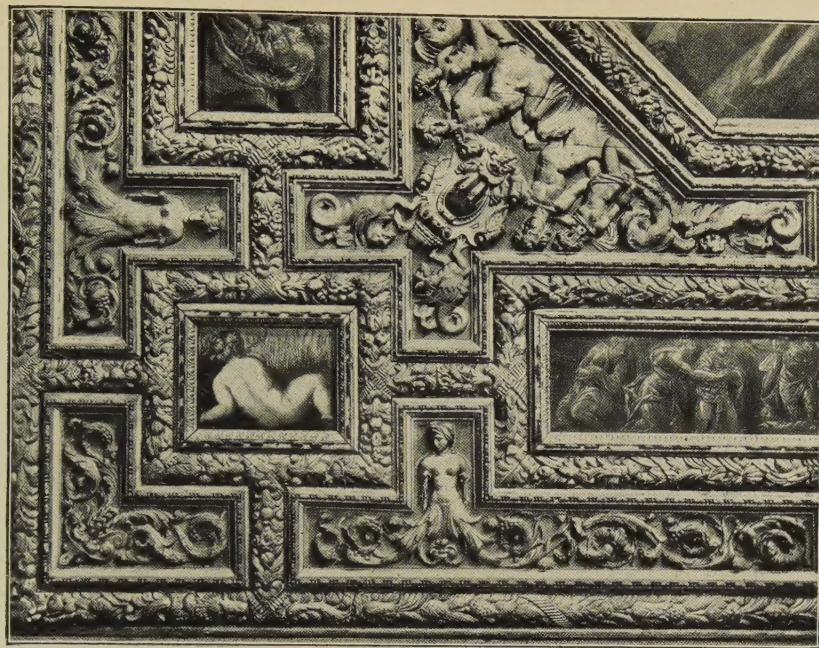
fortified castle, was built early in the ninth century, and in the troubulous period of early Venetian history was frequently burned and rebuilt. At the end of the twelfth century Sebastiano Ziani restored and enlarged it. The present palace was begun in 1300 by the building of the west façade, and was a slow growth extending over nearly three centuries, the older building of Ziani being gradually pulled down as room was required for the new work. About 1309 the arcaded sea-front was begun; and the design then adopted was accurately followed along the whole external façade. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the façade had been carried

1439. The internal block in the great court, joining the Porta della Carta to the east façade was built about 1462. In 1479 a fire consumed part of the fourteenth century buildings along the east front, and this part was then rebuilt, mostly between 1480 and 1550. These, in brief, are the facts (for which we are indebted to the account of Prof. J. H. Middleton) upon which historians have in general come to agree, though there is still difference of opinion as to the exact portions of the structure to which the various décrets refer.

An interesting theory concerning the design of the palace, and incidentally a critical estimate of its architecture, has been given us by Mr. George Edmund Street in his scholarly treatise upon "Brick

* Other views of the exterior of the Ducal Palace will be found in No. 1, 1895 and No. 12, 1898 of this Series.





DUCAL PALACE

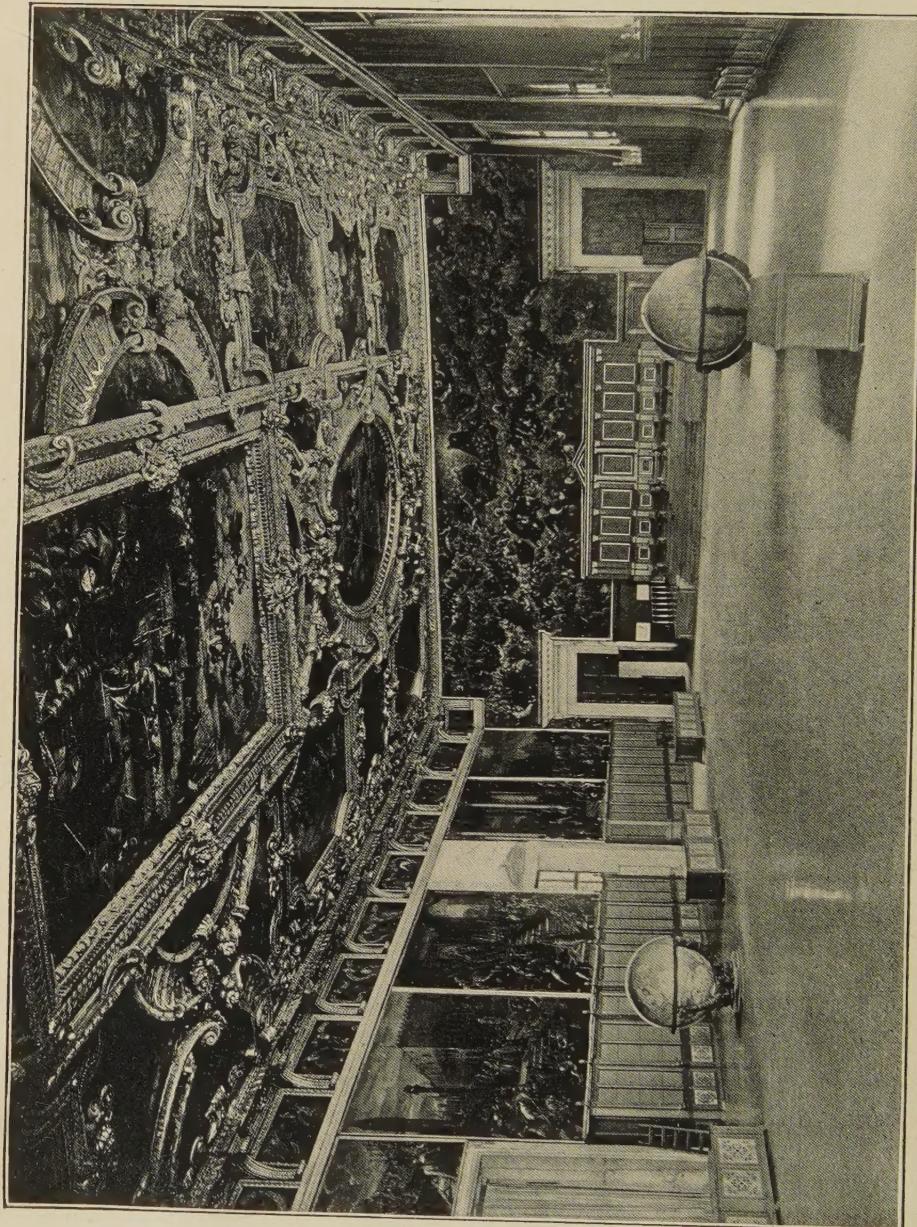
DETAIL OF CEILING, ANTE CHAMBER OF THE CHAPEL

and Marble in the Middle Ages." "The whole design" he writes, "is divided into three stages in height. The upper is nearly equal to the united height of the two lower stages, and is faced entirely with a delicate diaper of marble cut into small oblong pieces, which look save in their texture and color, only too much like bricks. In this marble-faced wall are pierced a number of windows with pointed arches — the tracery of which has been taken out — and in or near the centre of each façade is a much larger window and a balcony, which look as though they had been subsequently inserted. The lowest stage consists of a long and uniform arcade of very simple pointed arches resting upon circular columns with elaborately carved capitals; these columns have been shortened by some twenty inches of their old height by the rise of the water and the consequent elevation of the pavement, to the great damage of their effect. The intermediate stage is a magnificent arcade supporting very vigorous tracery and divided from the stages above and below it by large and pronounced lines of carved and moulded string-courses.

"It is important to observe that up to the top of the second string-course the whole of the architecture is of the very best

kind of Venetian pointed, and is, I believe, the very best and truest specimen of Gothic architecture south of the Alps.

"Above this noble work comes the third stage; and I confess, to my eye, with patent marks in every stone of which it is composed that it was designed by some other hand than that which had been so successful below. There is something quite chilling in the great waste of plain, unbroken wall, coming above the extreme richness of the arcades which support it; and moreover this placing of the richer work below and the plainer above is so contrary, not only to all ordinary canons of architecture, but just as much to the ordinary practice of the Venetians, that I feel sure that the impression which I have had from my first acquaintance with drawings of it is substantially correct; viz., that the line at which alterations and additions have been made is to be looked for rather in a horizontal than in a vertical direction; that in all probability, consequently, the builders of 1309 commenced with some portion of the sea-façade, and gradually carried on the greater part of the building to the height of the two stages, as we now see them, leaving the building finished in precisely the same way as the corresponding halls at Padua and Vicenza — two sto-



ries in height, with arcades covering the outer walls of the upper as well as of the lower stage; and that when the council chamber was found to be too small and larger rooms were required, another architect suggested the advantage of obtaining them by raising an immense story above the others and without destroying much of his predecessor's work providing rooms on the most magnificent scale for the Doge and his council.

"No one can examine the building without seeing that there is, not only in the detail but equally in the general design, a marked difference between the two lower stages and the upper stage. In place of the extreme boldness which marks every part of the former, we see mouldings reduced in the latter to the smallest and meanest section possible; the windows of the upper stage are badly designed, whilst the traceries of the second stage are as fine as they can possibly be; the parapet too is not equal in its design to any of the lower work, and crowns with an insignificant grotesqueness the noble symmetry of the two lower arcades; and finally the chequer-work of marble, which forms the whole of the upper wall, is a mode of construction which I have not seen in any early work, though it is seen in the Porta della Carta, and in other late work.

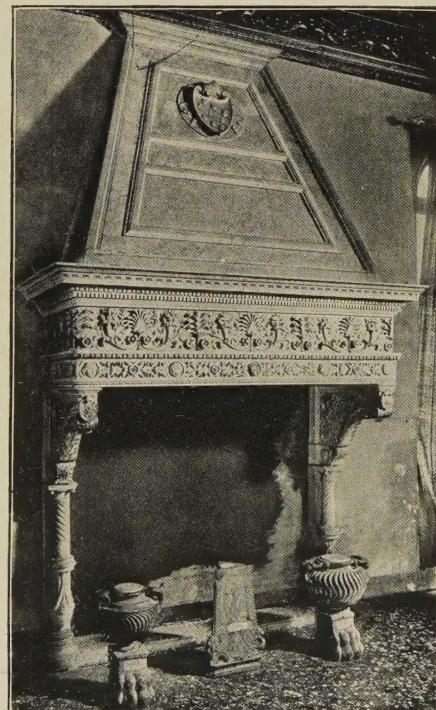
"Such, then, is the Ducal Palace,—a building certainly in some respects of almost unequalled beauty, but at the same time of unequal merit; its first and second stages quite perfect in their bold and nervous character, and, in the almost interminable succession of the same beautiful features in shaft and arch and tracery, forming one of the grandest proofs in the world of the exceeding value of perfect regularity, and of a repetition of good features in architecture, when it is possible to obtain it on a very large scale."

The whole Palace forms three sides of an unsymmetrical hollow square, the back, or north side, abutting upon St. Mark's Church. The great internal Court (Plate LXVII.) was begun at the end of the fifteenth century, but then only partially completed. It is surrounded on the south, east and west sides by Gothic arcades of very similar style to those on the exterior. Even in the sixteenth century portion the same main outline was followed, though the detail is different.

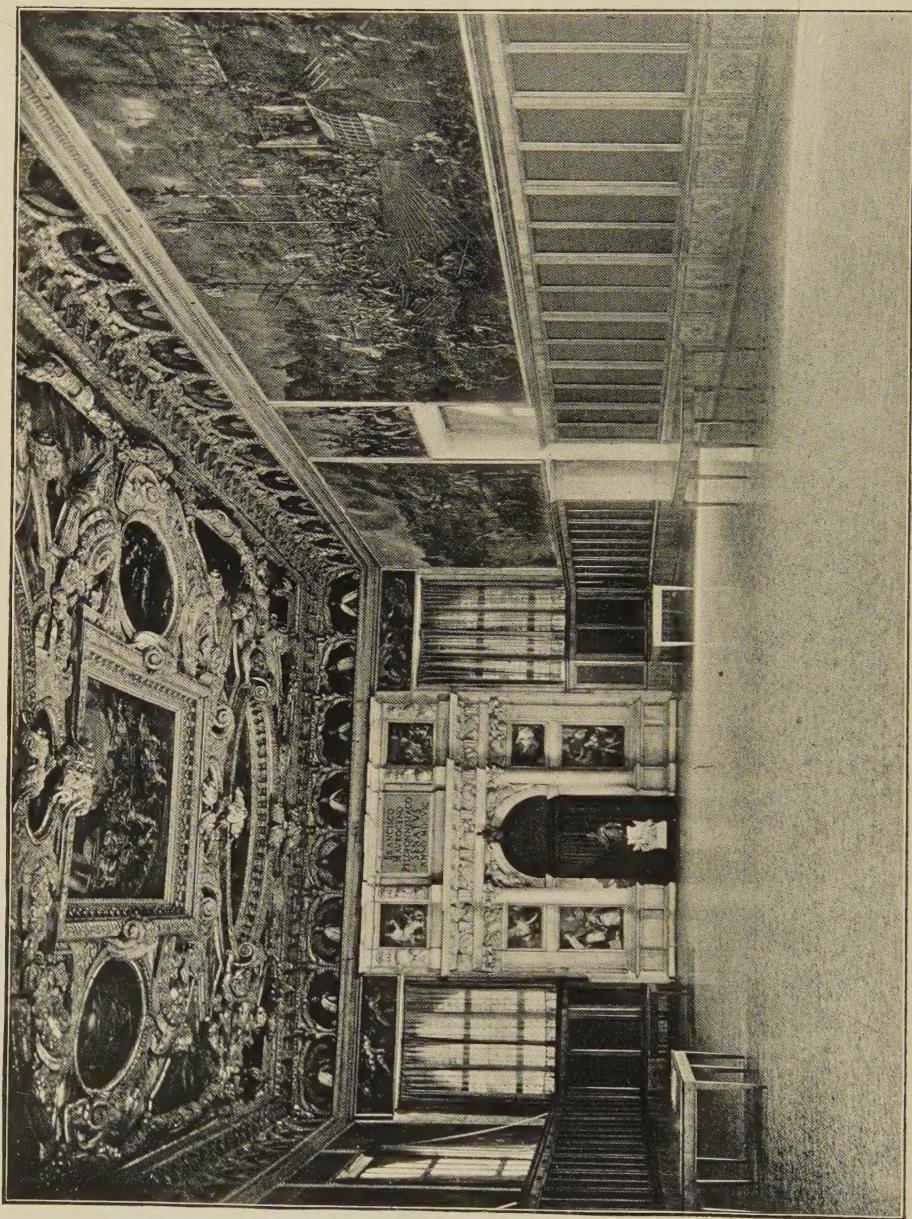
The entrance to the Courtyard, at the northwest angle adjoining St. Mark's, is through the Porta della Carta (so called because official notices were affixed to it), which was the last Gothic work added to the Palace. Across the court and opposite this entrance is a very beautiful staircase in the early-Renaissance style, built in the middle of the fifteenth century by Antonio Ricci. It is called the "Giant's Staircase" (Plate LXVIII.) from its two colossal and rather clumsy statues of Neptune and Mars. Between these statues the doges stood to be inaugurated.

Reached by this staircase is a second, the so-called "Golden Staircase" (Plate LXIX.), which derives its name either from the fact that it was formerly accessible only to those whose names were entered in the "Golden Book"—a list of the Venetian nobility,—or from the richness of its decoration, and this leads to the great apartments in the interior. It was designed by Jacapo Sansovino, and completed in 1577.

Owing to a great fire which gutted a great part of the Palace in 1574, the internal appearance of the council chambers and the state apartments of the doges was



DUCAL PALACE FIREPLACE IN DOGE'S BED-CHAMBER



completely changed, and a splendid series of early Paduan and Venetian paintings which adorned the walls of the chief rooms was destroyed. The interiors were then redecorated with their present magnificence, some idea of which may be gained from a mere enumeration of those who shared in the work. As architects there were Palladio, Sansovino, Scamozzi, Lombardi and Antonio da Ponte; as sculptors and decorators Vittoria, Aspetti, Segala, Campagna, Bombarda and di Silo; as painters Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoret, Vivarini, Palma, Tiepolo, and many others; so that each room became, as Ruskin has said, "a colossal casket of priceless treasure."

It will, however, be unnecessary to describe in detail each apartment illustrated by our engravings, even did space permit. Intended as spacious audience chambers to afford dignified and magnificent surroundings for the stately scenes which were to be enacted within them, they are all enriched in the same general style, with paneling, carving, and gilded moldings of the later Renaissance; the architectonic decorations being chiefly designed as a setting for the multitude of noble pictures.

The largest and most important of these apartments is the Hall of the Great Council (Plate LXX.), in which the entire body of the Venetian nobility met to consider questions of state. This immense room is fifty-five yards long, twenty-eight yards wide, and forty-seven feet high. The greatest of the Venetian masters were employed upon the ceiling; the entire east wall is occupied by Tintoretto's "Paradise"—said to be the largest oil painting in the world—and the walls are adorned with portraits of the doges and scenes from the history of the republic.

In the Sala dello Scrutino or Voting Hall (Plate LXI.), the forty-one nobles were elected by whom the doges were afterwards chosen. Opposite the entrance is a representation of the triumphal arch erected by the senate in 1694 to commemorate the conquest of Morea.

The Sala del Senato (Plate LXXII.), was the hall in which the full senate assembled in formal session. It is also called the Sala dei Pregadi because originally notice was sent to each senator to *pregare* or summon him to attend the meetings. Beyond this room, to the right of the throne, is an ante-chamber to the private chapel of the

doges. A portion of the ceiling of this ante-chamber, executed in the seventeenth century, is shown on page 139.

The Anticollégio (Plate LXXXI.), or waiting room for the ambassadors, was designed by Scamozzi, and contains Paul Veronese's celebrated painting, "The Rape of Europa."

The Anticollégio leads to the Sala del Collegio (Plate LXXXIV.), in which audiences were granted to foreign emissaries. On the raised platform stood the Doge's throne, and in the stall-like seats around it sat the state councillors.

A Change in The Brochure Series

BEGINNING with the January issue for 1901, the first issue of its Seventh Volume, two changes will be made in THE BROCHURE SERIES.

I. The magazine will be enlarged. Half as many full-page engravings and half as many illustrated text-pages as are included in the present issues will be added to each number.

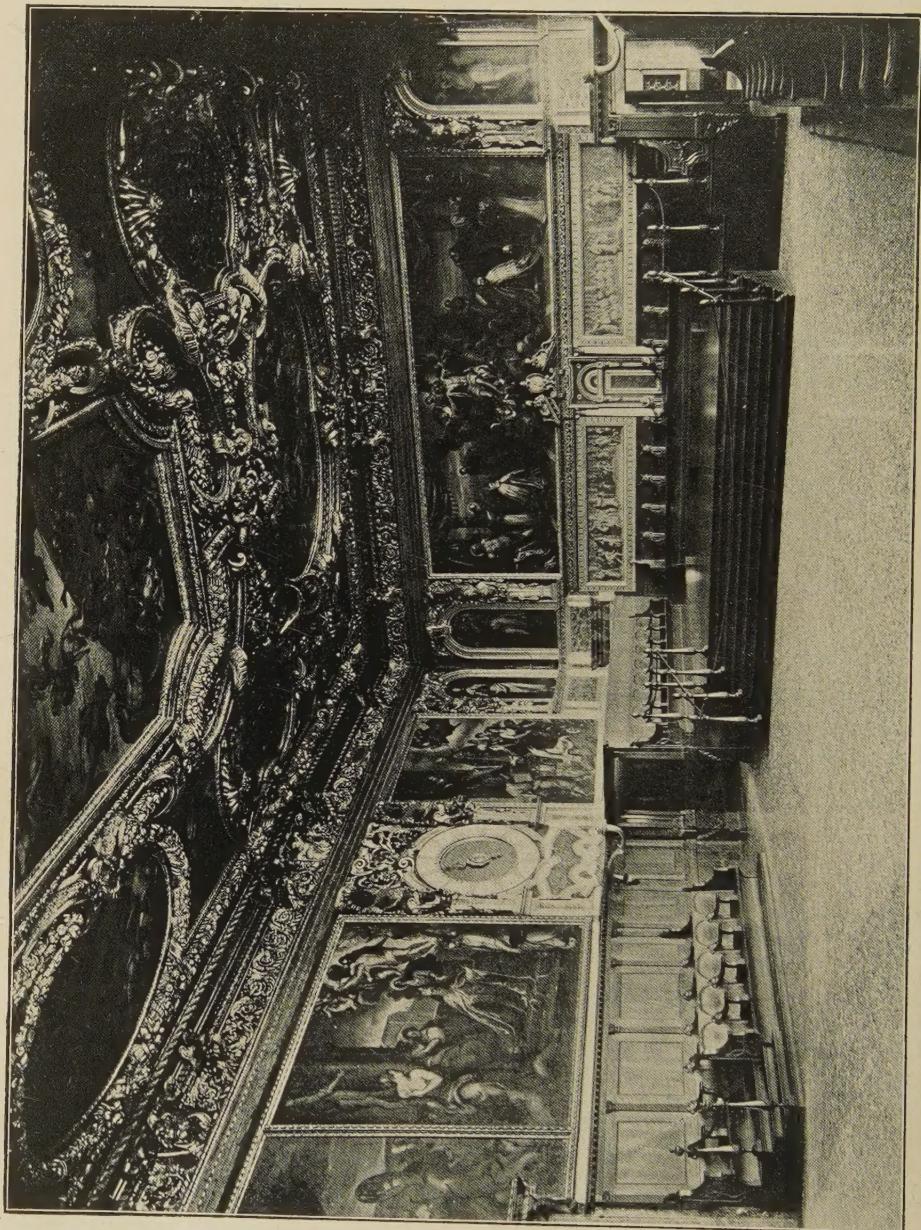
II. The price will be increased to \$1.00 a year and to ten cents a copy.

In general conduct, purpose, and in the character of material presented the magazine will be unchanged.

The Publishers are led to take this step because they believe that the magazine has a value and a field which are all its own, and that its value in that field will be increased by its enlargement. The value of the magazine in its present form is proved by the fact that its subscription list has shown a constant increase from the first number to the present time, and was never so large as it is now; and it is hoped and confidently believed that every present subscriber to THE BROCHURE will approve of the change, for the enlarged form will afford an opportunity to present more material, to present it more attractively, and to cover a wider field of interest.

Brochure Series Competition "P."

In answer to inquiries regarding Competition "P," the details of which are announced on an advertising page of this issue, the editor begs to state that photographic prints of any size may be submitted. Small photographs, provided they are clear and well defined, can often be as successfully reproduced as large ones.



Types of Italian Garden Fountains



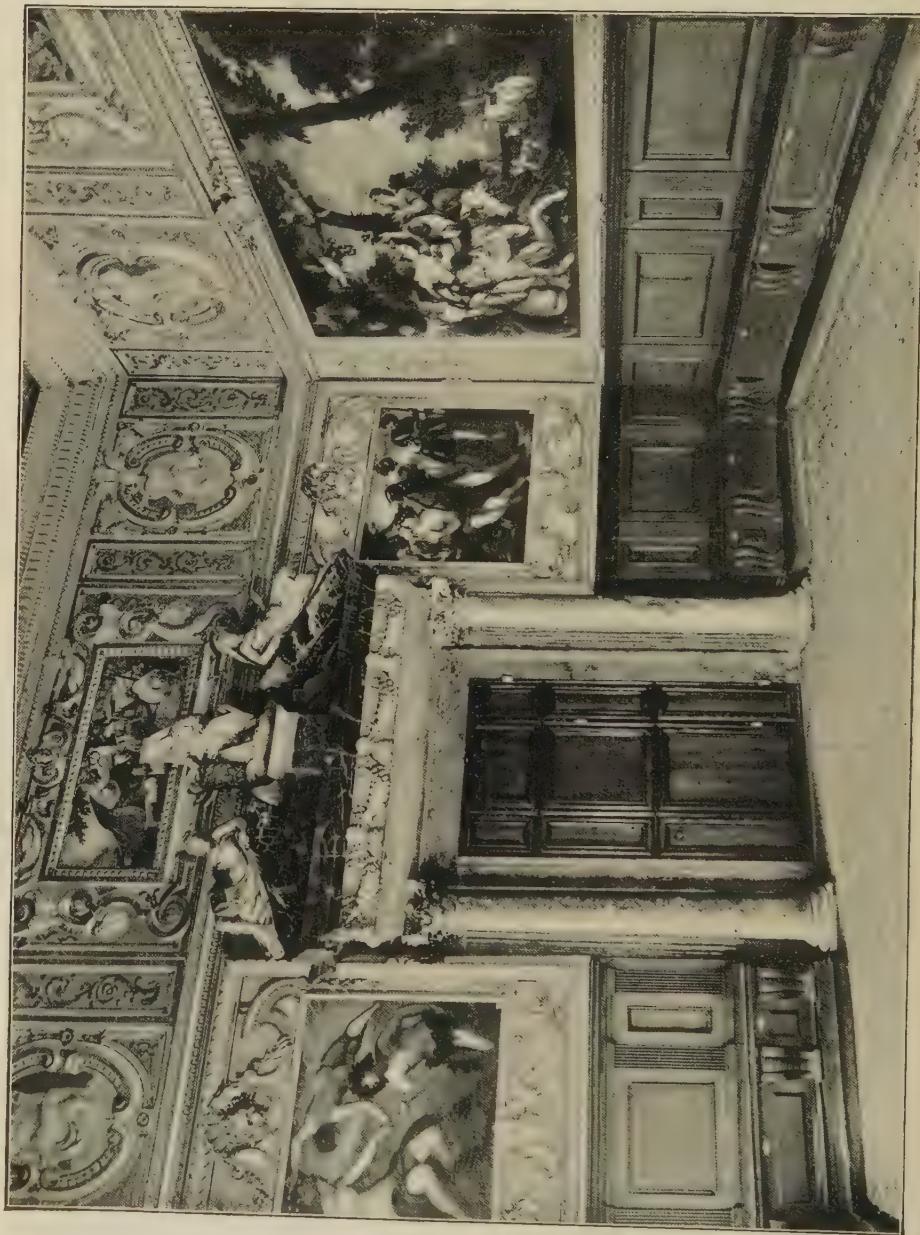
FOUNTAIN

VILLA MEDICI, ROME

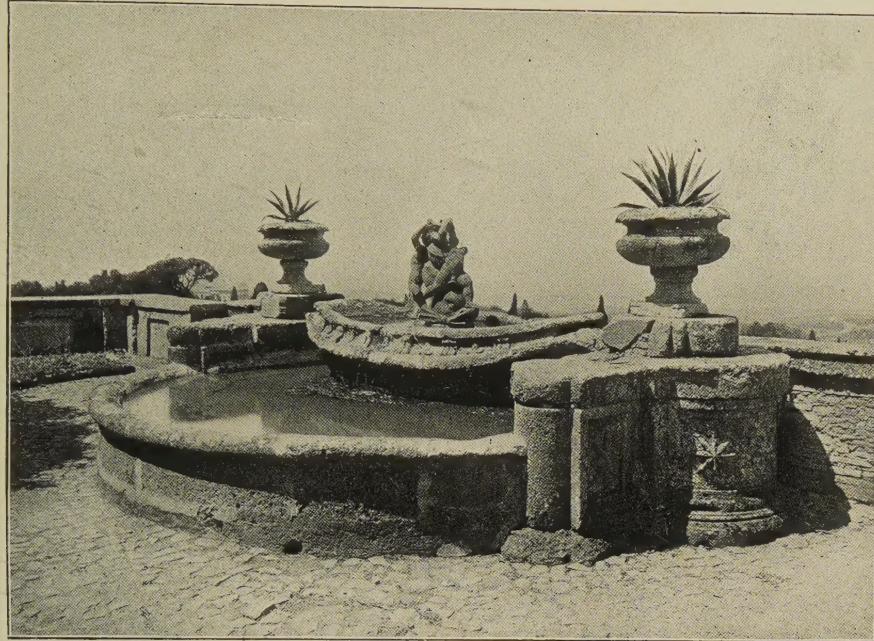


FOUNTAIN BY BERNINI

VILLA BORGHESE, ROME

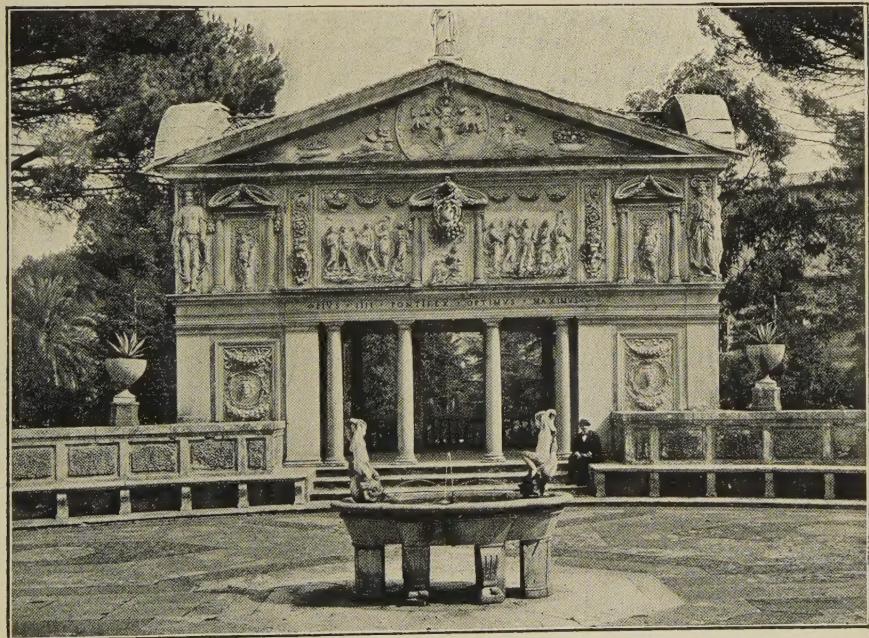


Types of Italian Garden Fountains



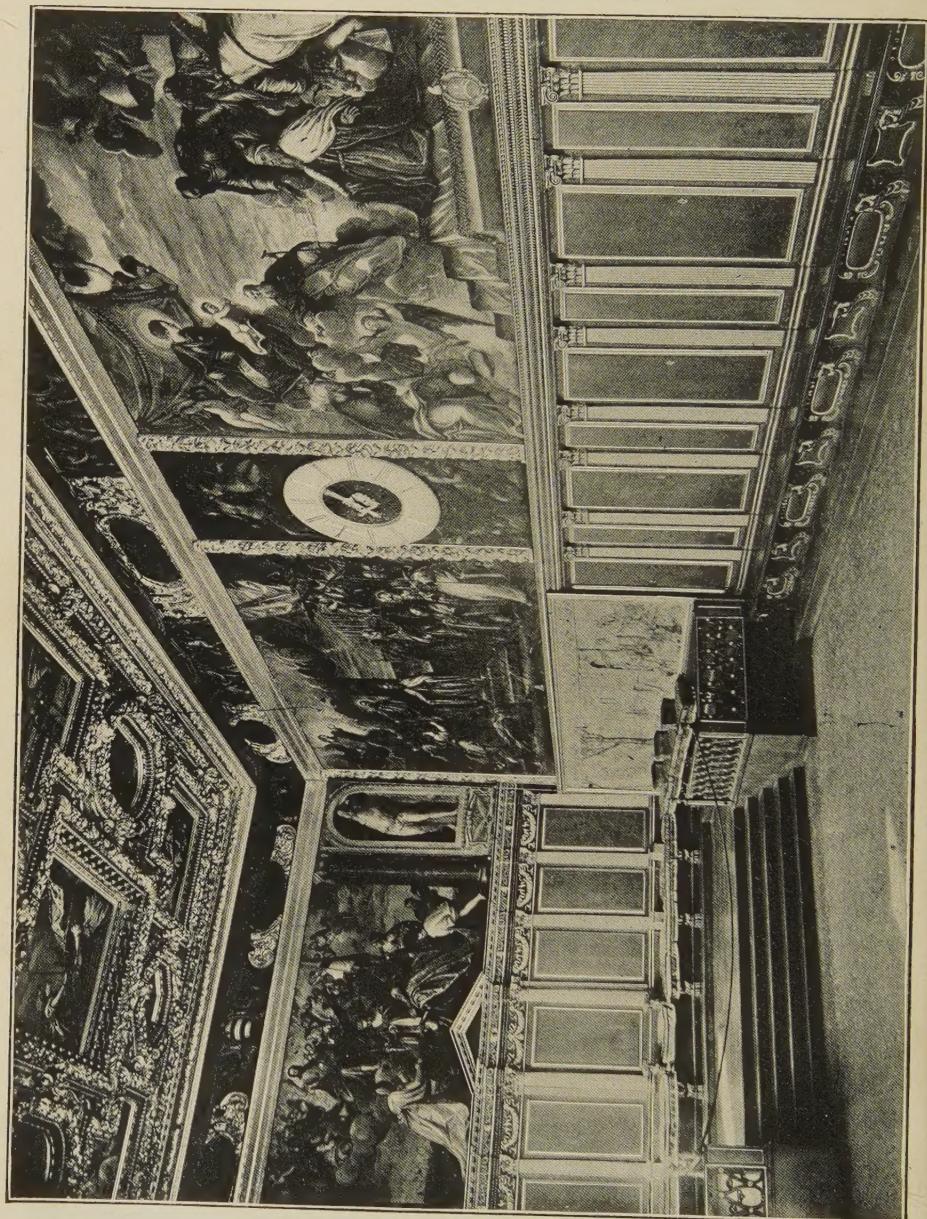
FOUNTAIN

VILLA ANDORRANDINI, FRASCATI



FOUNTAIN

GARDENS OF THE VATICAN, ROME



THE BROCHURE SERIES

The Château of Chambord:
France

Louis XVI. Sconces

OCTOBER, 1900

